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State Capitol, Lincoln 68509-4604

April 25, 2001

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
United States Senate
250 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Hagel,

The Nebraska Unicameral Legislature is committed to assisting and supporting the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which ensures that all children with disabilities are provided a free and appropriate education.

Since the passage of the 1975 IDEA, Congress has yet to fulfill the congressional committed 40 percent share of the average per pupil expenditures which assists our state in providing a free and appropriate education to all disabled children in Nebraska. The members of the Nebraska Legislature are committed to appropriating their share of the educational funding costs but find the 8% - 12% congressional appropriations unacceptable and not consistent with the intent of Congress when it passed the original act.

If Nebraska were to receive the \$111,781,000 that Congress has committed for the 2002 Fiscal Year, the improvements to our special education programs and services would be significant. In 1998 the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted a review in Nebraska which assessed the compliance and implementation of IDEA in Nebraska. The study which was just recently released, shows that while Nebraska has many strengths, there are many areas in vital need of improvement. The members of the Nebraska Legislature recognize the fact that children with disabilities deserve an equal educational